

The Millers River Watershed Council

Blue Trails



Blue Trails

*Protecting watersheds,
connecting communities*

A blue trail (also known as blueway or water trail) is a dedicated stretch of river that enjoys special clean water safeguards and is a destination for fishing, boating and other recreation. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, blue trails help people discover rivers. Blue trails provide a fun, exciting way to get kids outdoors, connect communities to treasured landscapes, and are economic drivers benefiting local businesses and quality of life.

American Rivers

Why a Blue Trail?

- Enhance local economies
- Protect the environment
- Promote healthy living
- Preserve history and community identity
- Reconnect people and places

MRWC Mission

MRWC's mission is to protect and enhance the health of the Millers River and its watershed for the long-term benefit of its human and non-human residents.

We pursue this goal by:

- educating residents and local officials on watershed issues and encouraging them to be advocates for the watershed;
- involving people in monitoring and other stewardship activities; and
- collaborating with municipalities, state agencies and other organizations on issues affecting watershed health, such as public access, stormwater management, drinking water protection, and land-use/development.

Project Features

- o **1. Develop water trails on the Millers & Otter Rivers**
- o **2. Conduct trail surveys, map out trail features**
Natural & Historic, recreation etc...
- o **3. Prepare trail infrastructure**
- o **4. Hold trail work-parties**
- o **5. Trail Day Celebration!**
- o **6. Print a trail map/guide**
- o **7. Establish and implement long term water quality monitoring program**
- o **8. Long term stewardship teams/open space protection**
- o **9. Enjoy the rivers!**

Goals of this Initiative

- This initiative seeks to bring people onto the rivers for recreational enjoyment and to foster greater awareness of the rivers' special values.
- Through this awareness, MRWC seeks to have people step up and embrace the stewardship efforts necessary to care for, preserve and renew the rivers' natural resources.
- This project is meant to encourage appreciation of these river segments, and to begin a broader effort for the entire watershed.

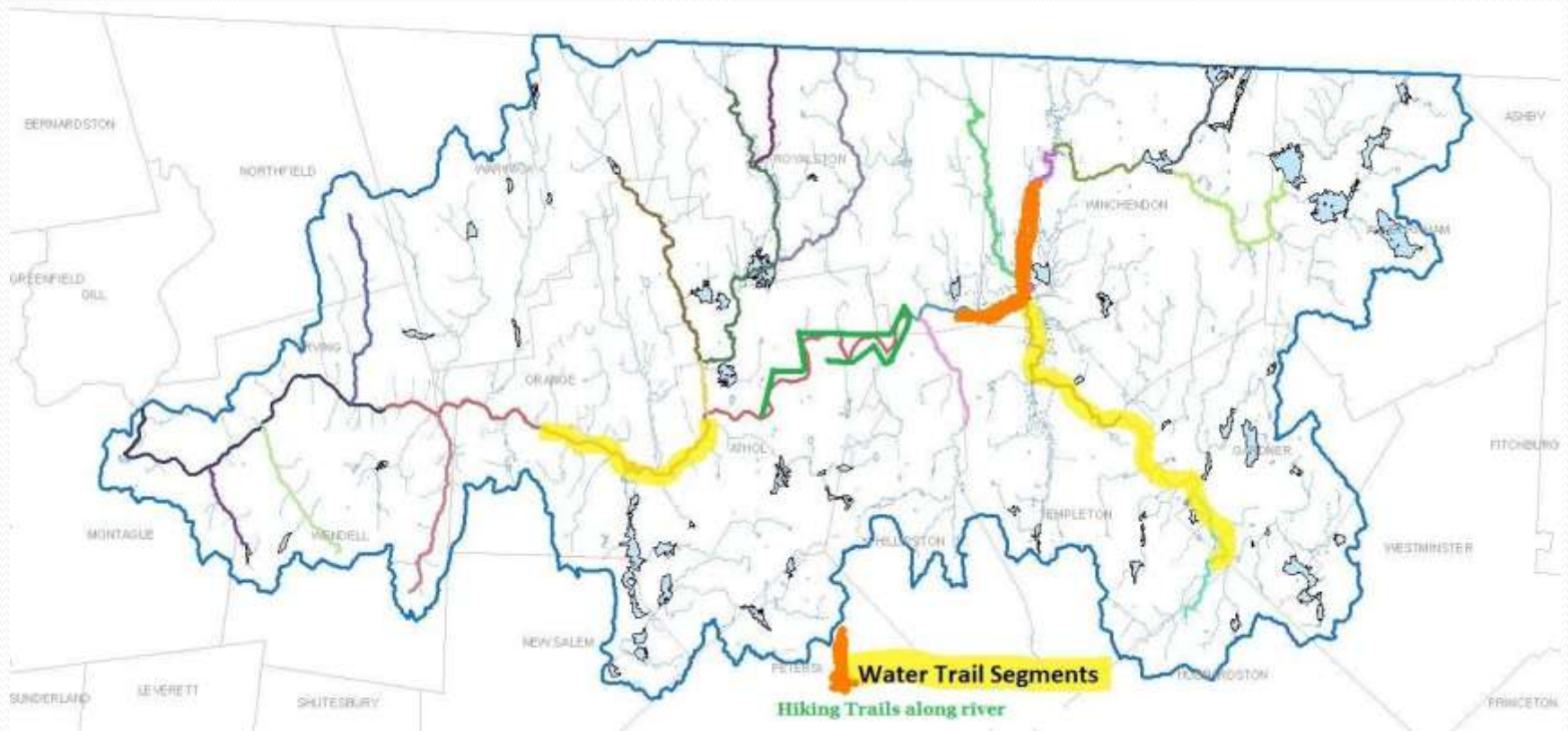
Get people engaged!



Action plan

1. **Hold information and discussion meetings with interested people and groups. Form initial Trail Team.**
2. **Identify trail corridors, existing infrastructure/resources, local knowledge, information gaps, needed resources and funds (implement search to meet needs), ID open space needs**
3. **Schedule field work, surveys, service days, trail celebration day**
4. **Inform broader public of project efforts, invite participation and support (individuals and businesses)**
5. **Establish stewardship teams**
6. **Get out on the water and make this happen!**

Millers River Watershed



Target areas

● **Millers**

- Phase 1: Orange/Athol segment
- Use new parks as anchors
- Other access points?
- Survey unique areas
- Trail map (@ kiosks)
- Trail name? Logo?
- Monitor bacteria along corridor
- Adopters? Stewardship.

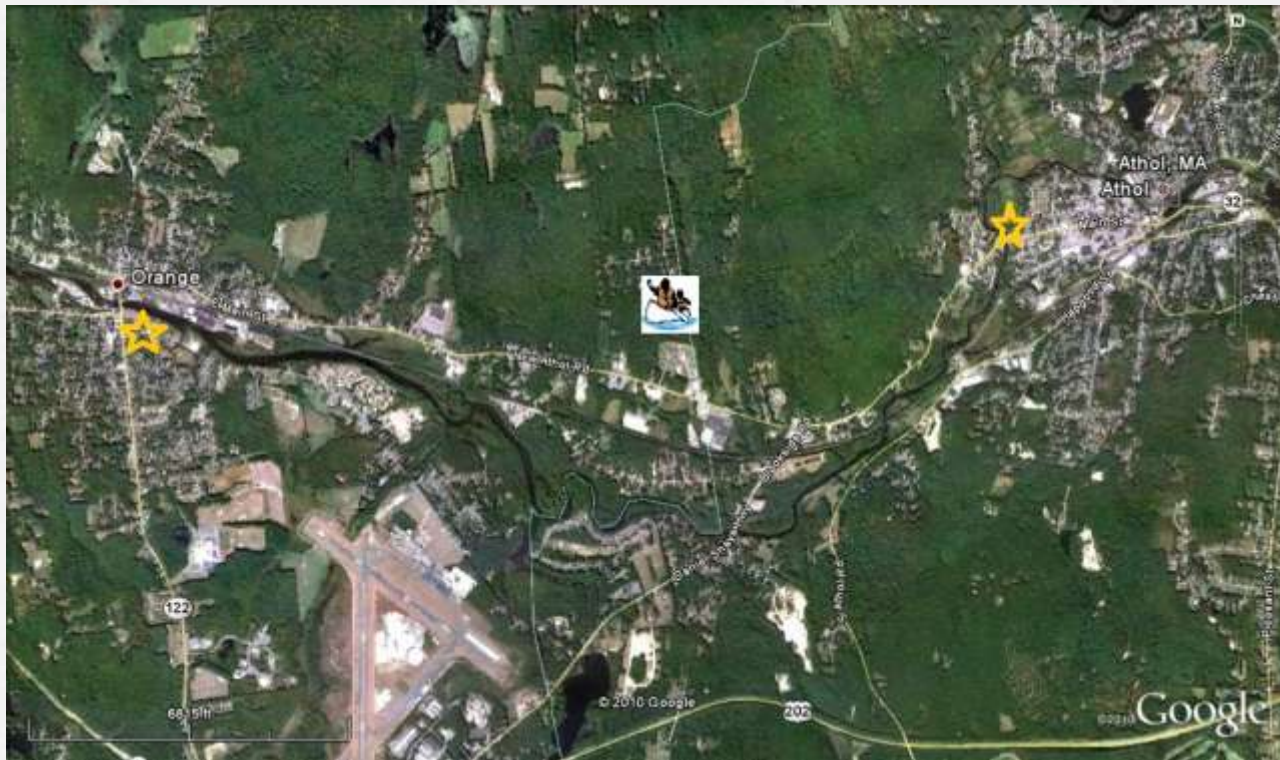
● **Otter**

- River needs TLC
- Multiple trail segments
- Identify access points
- Survey unique areas
- Make trail map
- Monitor bacteria/clarity
- Adopters?
- Logo? Contest?

Millers River Blue Trail



Millers Blue Trail birds-eye-view



Why a Trail?

A trail has an identity people can adopt & care for.

Documenting the trail creates a baseline and let's people know special features to visit on their outings.

Stewardship teams ensure long term care for the resource.

Monitoring water quality let's people know the water is healthy.

The why



It's a great place!



River History




MRWC
Millers River
Watershed Council, Inc.
100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331
ph 978-248-9491
Email council@millersriver.net


Millers River Blue Trail

*Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land,
Blue Trails help people discover rivers!*

LOGO Contest

*The Trail needs a logo for the community and visitors to identify with
and you can help design the logo!*

Guidelines:

1. Needs to fit in either of the following shapes:  
2. Must say **Millers River Blue Trail** (font choice is yours)
3. Logo should present or depict a trail motif
4. Other natural or historical motifs can be presented
5. Design needs to be simple, easy to craft into signage or put on brochures (small size)
6. All entries become property of MRWC

Entries must be submitted to MRWC by June 1, 2011.

Entries can be submitted digitally or by postal mail (scanable quality)

MRWC will present the chosen logo at the July 23 Trail Day event.

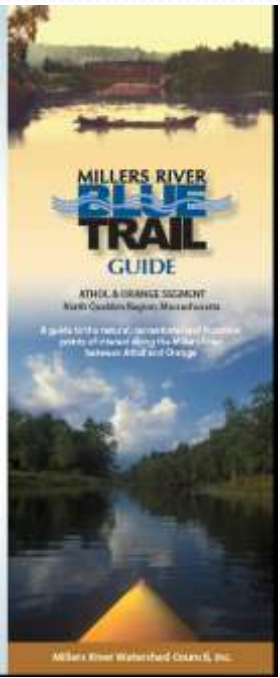
The creator of the chosen logo will be recognized.

Questions: call 978-248-9491 or watershed_Americorps@mountgrace.org

Good luck & good river running!



Making it happen!



Trail stuff:



MILLERS RIVER BLUE TRAIL

ATHOL & ORANGE SEGMENT

What to look for...



Blue herons. These striking birds are often found in the wooded backwaters and cross a long trail, where they fish for food in the slow flows.



Wood Turtles. Cass Mowbray lists this turtle* which is medium-sized (5.5-8 lb) and can be recognized by its scaly shell and orange coloration on the legs and neck. It is a species of special concern.



Odonates. Dragonflies, including the American Rubens*, favor the quiet, gravel-bottomed near shore of the Daniel Shays Highway, whereas the Eastern Aeshnids* (shown on reverse) like the slower river below.



Muskrats. The Millers River is home to this species of muskrat, including the "trough flounder", which is of special concern* due to its low abundance in the stretch. The Eastern Elliptic is abundant.



Fish. The river is stocked with trout. Rock bass and northern pike, some large pike have been caught.



Footprints. Keep an eye out for footprints in the mud along the riverbanks. You may identify beaver, mink, otter*, raccoon or another wildlife.

Invasive plants. Along the banks in August you may see the beautiful, but non-native invasive, Purple Loosestrife, as well as Japanese knotweed, which looks like bamboo. In some cases you may see invasive aquatic plants like milfoil* and cabomba. Please report these to MWR.

... and more

Paddling Options

The Athol & Orange segment of the Millers River accommodates paddlers of all ages and skill levels, and can be enjoyed from either direction and for varying distances.

Some suggestions for distances/times: approximately, depending on how long you linger!

Rich Park, Athol (R2) downstream to Orange Riverfront Park (R22): 5 miles (3-4 hours)

Orange RP (R22) upstream to Daniel Shays Highway bridge and return downstream: 4 miles (3-4 hours)

Rich Park (R2) downstream to Mass. Fish & Wildlife protected area (see map inset), return upstream to Rich Park: 4 miles (2-3 hours)

Come and be inspired!



Miles
1 inch = 0.3 miles (approx.)

Please be sure not to disturb the wildlife.

To Routes 2 & 202
and Quabbin Reservoir

River Safety & Etiquette

The Millers River flows relatively smoothly between downtown Athol and Orange throughout the paddling season. However, paddlers should always be on the lookout for downed trees, rocks and other obstacles that can pose serious hazards. Wearing a life jacket is recommended.

Highlighted Blue Trail Paddle Stops may be used for brief pullouts, not for camping. Stay near your boat and "leave no trace" of your visit. Please respect private property and avoid trespassing and littering at all times.

Useful Resources

Athol Bird & Nature Club: www.atholbirdclub.org for nature programs and events calendar
North Quabbin Woods: www.northquabbinwoods.org for recreational opportunities
North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce: www.northquabbinchamber.com for local business listings

Millers River Watershed Council, Inc.

The Millers River Watershed Council, Inc. was founded in 1970 to protect the health of the Millers River and its watershed. MWR remains a small organization focused on providing volunteer water monitoring, as well as recreational and educational activities for watershed residents. MWR also serves as an advocate for local concerns and works collaboratively with towns, government agencies and community members to provide effective long-term solutions.

To support the Millers River Blue Trail and other MWR projects, please contact us at:
100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331 • 978-248-9491 • con@millersriver.net

Visit our website: www.millersriver.net

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Map location



Legend

- Town centers
- State land
- River and ponds
- Streams
- Intermittent streams
- Wetlands
- Canoe/kayak access point & parking
- X Paddle stops
- State highway
- Major road
- Secondary road
- Railroad tracks
- Town lines
- Ancient lake shore (#10)
- 1 Points of interest – see reverse side of guide

Map illustration by Barbara A. Strout



James Bachman

MILLERS RIVER BLUE TRAIL GUIDE ATHOL & ORANGE SEGMENT



South River Street Bridge, Athol, c. 1900

- Cass Meadow.** Looking much like it did in better times, the large open field is full of weeds along the river that are loved by the Peeping Wren for growing rice. It is also home to thousands of songbirds. With such habitat increasingly scarce in Massachusetts, Cass Meadow is now protected and managed as both sides of the river by the state and town.
- Alan E. Rich Environmental Park.** Alan E. Rich Park, adjacent to Cass Meadow, is a launch point on the Blue Trail. The park contains native plants and is built with permeable pavement and other Low Impact Development (LID) features that manage stormwater and restore groundwater recharge. The park and meadow are one of Massachusetts' 1000 "meadow" places.
- Baptism Cove.** Between 1871 and 1881, local Baptists routinely baptized their children in the river here, using either side of the span of the South Main Street Bridge.
- Athol South Main Street Bridge.** In Athol and Orange, bridges crossed the river near the park, first by ferry, then by trolley bridge, which was built around 1871 of stone and logs. In 1879 a covered bridge took its place. Followed by the so-called Iron Bridge in 1901, a stone and cement bridge in 1917, and the present structure in 1973.
- Indian Village, 1600s–Early 1700s.** In the location of South Main Street, and across the river from the Waste Water Treatment Plant, the Peeping Indians built their wigwags, raised their families, worshipped, planted corn and raised the plentiful rice, which they called Hapagay. This was their main subsistence food.
- Athol Waste Water Treatment Plant/Chief Pequigau Island.** The waste treatment plant on the south bank was constructed in 1973 to remove pollutants from the town's wastewater before sending the water to the river. In this area there was once a "Great Island" thought to be the home of Chief Pequigau, which was removed in 1941 as a flood control measure.
- Rowlandson Rock.** Downstream of the railroad bridge, a large rock rising above the water off South Main Street is known as Rowlandson Rock. In 1703 fleeing Indians moved the river with their captives, including Mary Rowlandson of Lancaster, after their bloody attack on her town on March 1, 1676. Frontier soldiers recovering 400 percent from the 65 miles they began up their chase at the river's edge.
- River Terraces.** While along the north bank, downstream of the railroad bridge and behind the cemetery, several dry like river terraces. These terraces are river banks and river levels — perhaps common all.
- Covered Bridge, 1874–1938.** The stone, 100-foot bridge that spanned the river on Cape Road was built in 1874 at the suggestion of Edward Gage, who was looking for a cheap shortcut to town that would avoid travel near the railroad tracks along South Main Street. This "Peppergrove bridge" did good service until the great flood of September 25, 1938 swept it off its foundation. It still stands as a reminder of the old.
- Ancient Lake Shore.** The river area lying between Daniel Webster Highway in Athol and Orange Center on the west formed the north shore of Great Lake Orange at the end of the last Age. Extending 15 miles north, the lake was created when a massive ice field clogged the river at Wendell Depot, and led to hundreds or thousands of years.

David Phillips

River of Millers in Orange

West River

Blue River



Looking up the Millers River bridge, 1900

is a large place for a small tribe of Native Americans. According to legend, they were ruled by an aged white woman (sage) who had been captured while a young girl, raised by the tribe and named to chief. The tribe continued to avoid contact with the state as late as the 1830s.

Steamboats on the Millers, 1882–1920s. "When thought of steamboats plying between Athol and Orange," a writer survived in August 1881, when the "Miller's," a 20-passenger fully steamboat began to ply the passenger line from Athol to the present Orange for station to points several miles upstream. For 10 years, pleasure trips to Brookside Park and the covered bridge on Cape Road in Athol — as, on rare occasions when river conditions allowed, all the way to the South River Street Bridge in downtown Athol.

Riverfront Park/O'Connell's Wharf, 1907–1952. The wharf was named for "Johnny" John O'Connell, an early promoter of recreational boating in the river, who in May 1907 built a 20 x 14 foot launch on the south shore (at the river street in Orange) and moved across the river to the wharf. He also gave away passenger rides in his launch upstream for the and a quarter mile. Today there is a new launch and launch point at this location, called Brookside Park, which is also the best place for the annual River Boat Race.

Water Carnivals, 1872–1932. This event began when the dam in Orange was used for the July regatta, that featured parades of decorated boats, boat races, water battles, tug-a-war and swimming contests. The river was lighted after dark by oil-burned torchlights, flower lanterns and paper lanterns. Games included croquet, canoe races, archery, canoe and power boat.

Memorial Park & Peace Statue. Sculpted by Joseph Mills and dedicated in Memorial Park in Orange on May 30, 1914, this statue is unique and famous as a war memorial that appeals to peace. A statue was stolen from World War I soldiers a young boy "To Vail Not Be Again."

Orange South Main Street Bridge, 1802–03. The main crossing of the Millers River in Orange was a wooden bridge erected in 1802–03, and replaced in 1879 by the so-called "Stone Bridge" or "New Home Bridge," named for the New Home Sewing Machine Company that operated on both sides of the river. That company began with stone bridge was succeeded in turn by a steel bridge in 1917–18, which was rebuilt in 2005.

"New Home Dam" and Earl Pass. There has been a major dam at this site, just west of the street bridge, since 1796 when James Brown built one of his to provide water power for his grist and saw mills. The structure was rebuilt in 1877 and lasted until 1901, when the New Home Sewing Machine Company erected a new one. Following the floods of 1918 and 1938, the state built the current dam in 1939, lowering its height by four feet, and moved over control to the town in 1941. An earthen dam was built by the Athol and Orange Club in 1896, just downstream of the dam in 2009 on the south bank, to help restore significant passage of this native aquatic species to its historical range.

The Millers River Blue Trail and this Blue Guide are projects of the Millers River Watershed Council, in collaboration with numerous organizations and individuals. MRWC wishes to especially thank the following for their support: Athol and Orange Clubs, Massachusetts DEP, North Quabbin River, New England Greenway Development Fund, Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, Dave Noyes, James Loring, Billy Jay and Jeff Dwyer. A very early special thanks to Richard Norton, whose historical research provided the basis for this Blue Guide.

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\$3.00
\$10.00
\$15.00
\$20.00

Millers River Watershed Council, Inc.

Getting out...



Eco-tourism potential



The possibilities are many!



Stewardship





TREES, PADDLERS AND WILDLIFE

Safeguarding Ecological and
Recreational Values on the River



Appalachian Mountain Club



Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game
Division of Ecological Restoration
Riverway Program


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"Adopt a Sample"



HELP us monitor the Millers and Otter Rivers in 2011.

Your \$25 donation covers a sample of the River

A Tax deductible contribution

MRWC will sample for bacteria to test the health of the river and
check its water quality "contact standard" for recreation.

We plan to sample this summer, May to September, and need

100+ donors to make this work!

Support water testing & own a piece of this monitoring program!

Send donation to:

**Millers River
Watershed Council, Inc.
100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331**

Note: "Buy a Sample"

All donors will be acknowledged in the final monitoring report this fall.

THANK YOU!

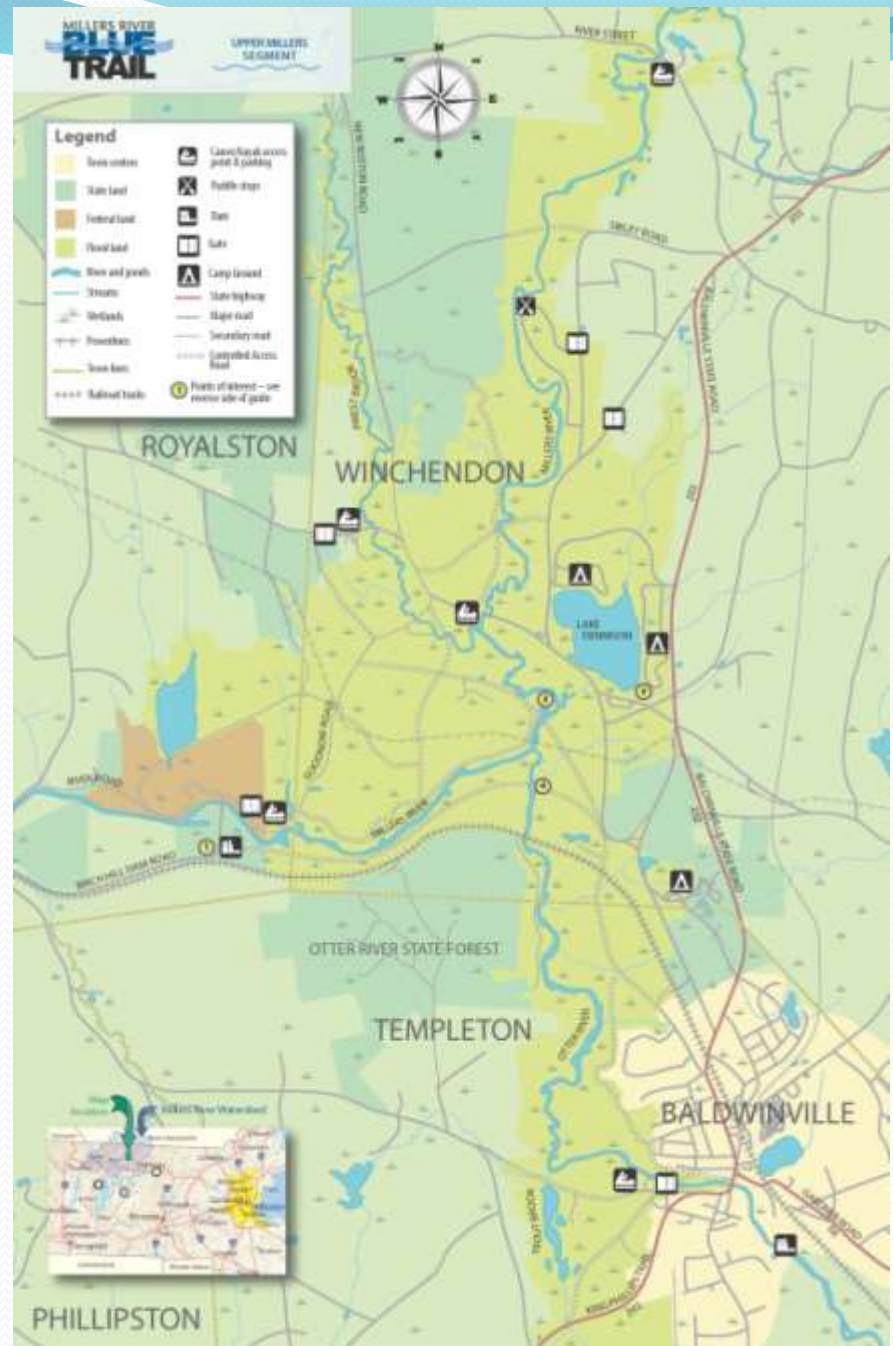
The Future.....



Launch site @ Plant Rd, E Templeton, Park OFF road.

The Otter River Headwaters Blue Trail is a smooth water paddle, narrow and a fine exploration trip, be prepared to carry over beaver dams and view wildlife, Rt 101 to Otter River Conservation area = 4.2 miles, one way.

For Trail conditions check: www.millerswatershed.org



Thank you!

